

THE

EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT:

"CHRIST DIED FOR ALL."—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

A SERMON,

DELIVERED

ON SUNDAY EVENING, THE 26TH OCTOBER, 1856,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BURNET,

IN

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, HAMILTON, C. W.



HAMILTON:

SMILEY & GILLESPIE, COURT-HOUSE SQUARE

TORONTO:

ANDREW H. ARMOUR & COMPANY.

TO THE
CONGREGATION OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,
THIS SERMON IS HUMBLY AND PRAYERFULLY
DEDICATED, BY THE

AUTHOR.

HAMILTON, 30th Oct. 1856.

SERMON:

THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

"For the Love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; And that he died for all, that they which live, should not, henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Cor., v. 14, 15.

In his epistles, the aim of the Apostle Paul was, generally, to correct the irregularities into which the Churches he planted had fallen; to confute the errors of false teachers;—or, to direct particular individuals in the discharge of those duties which he had assigned them.

This epistle was evidently written to correct the errors into which the Corinthian Church had fallen.

Titus, who carried the first epistle to Corinth, learned from conversing with St. Paul's opponents, or otherwise, the arguments and objections by which certain men endeavored to lessen that Apostle's authority, and, also, the scoffing speeches by which they strove to bring him into contempt. To understand the chapter aright, from which our text is quoted, it is necessary to bear in mind, then, what effect the temper and bearing of the faction opposed to the Apostle Paul, had produced in the Corinthian Church. We have every reason to believe that these matters were fully explained to Paul by his messenger, and in this, as well as in the previous and succeeding chapters, Paul wisely introduced refutations of the arguments and objections urged by these false teachers, and by close reasoning, as well as, at times, by cutting sarcasm, he covered his adversaries with shame.

In the verses immediately preceding our text, he indirectly refers to the means by which the false teachers had recommended themselves.

At the 12th verse, he says, "For we commend not ourselves again to you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance and not in heart," alluding to the manner in which the false teachers

had established themselves at Corinth, viz: neither by working miracles, nor by communicating to the Corinthians spiritual gifts, but by producing letters of recommendation from some parties in Judea, and by vaunting foolishly of their own talents. The Apostle, however, might well ask, as indeed he does in the beginning of the third chapter, "Must we begin again to recommend ourselves?" By recommending himself, the Apostle certainly did not mean, *praising himself*, for thus he could not possibly prove himself to be an Apostle of Christ. But he meant to enquire whether it were necessary, or even becoming of him to propose anew to the Corinthians, the proofs of his Apostleship. He had done this in his former letter, chapter ninth. As if he had said, "Must we begin again to *establish* ourselves" as an Apostle of Christ.

Well might he affirm, I need no letter of recommendation, ye are the copy of our recommendation from Christ, which is written on your hearts, known and read of all men; for, by your conversion, and by your spiritual gifts, ye plainly demonstrate the recommendation given to me by the Lord Jesus, written not with ink as the letters of the false teachers were, but with the Spirit of the living God; not as in the case of Moses, on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tablets of your hearts. What he had thus said in proof of his own faithfulness in the ministry could not be imputed to vanity, for he told the Corinthians that he had mentioned these things *not* to present to them reasons why they should boast of him as an Apostle, *but* to enable them to answer those who boasted in the false teachers, on account of external manifestations, not on account of good dispositions of the heart.

In other words, it was not to exalt *himself*, or his ministrations unduly, but to counteract the assumptions, and to repel the accusations advanced by false instructors. Further, because the faction represented the Apostle as a madman for preaching the gospel at the hazard of his life, without reaping any worldly advantage from it, he assured the Corinthians that if in so doing he acted in the opinion of his opponents, as a madman, it was for the glory of God, or if he acted in the opinion of the sincere part of the Church, as being in his right mind, by shunning persecution, it was for the sake of his disciples, that he might be the longer continued with them; and in either case, he was moved by a strong sense of the love of Christ; declaring, as he emphatically does, that this was his only

motive, whether in the discharge of duty, or, in the endurance of trial. It is hardly necessary to say, that the same is the actuating motive of every believer; for, no one can render acceptable service, save when he is actuated as his chief and leading motive by love to Christ. We proceed, then, to enquire respecting the effects of this motive on the Apostle's mind, and on the minds of all, who like him, are truly enlightened.

He judged first that all men were dead in trespasses and sins.

God indeed made man upright, but it is plain from every source of information open to man, that he is a fallen, and therefore a depraved being. By the curse consequent on the fall, he is cut off from God, who alone is the fountain of all purity and happiness. According to the Scriptures, fallen man is "lost," he is "already condemned," "all are by nature accursed"—"the children of wrath;" and therefore such as are not regenerated, or created anew, must inevitably perish, because "the wrath of God abideth upon them." All sinned and died in Adam, hence all are dead in trespasses and sins. By the riches of God's grace many are plucked as brands from the burning, while others are left to perish. The great source of error, in regard to the extent of the atonement of Christ, consists in not properly understanding our fall in Adam.

In virtue of the relation in which we stand to our first father, Adam, his guilt is our guilt, and we were all most justly condemned *in him*. This fact so often advanced in scripture, is a stumbling-block and foolishness to those whose imaginations are not cast down by the gospel coming to them in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. The pride of the human heart rebels against this doctrine, although, it is not only plainly taught in scripture, but is confirmed by what is daily passing around us in the world. We see death reigning over those who could *not* have sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Death, however, is declared to be the wages of sin, and if such, those who die before they have committed actual transgression could not have been subjected to death *temporal*. It is a fundamental doctrine, and beautifully brought out in Paul's epistle to the Romans, that as Adam's sin is imputed to all his posterity, so is the righteousness of the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, imputed to all his children. The view, then, given in the Word of God, is, that all men sinned in Adam, and so became liable to the curse of death temporal, spiritual

and eternal. That those whom Christ loved with an everlasting love, and were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, were delivered from going down to the pit, God having found a ransom. As ungodliness and worldly lusts are proofs of guilt, condemnation, and consequent alienation from God, so, when the love of Christ constrains to good works, these works are the evidence of justification, and of having passed from death unto life. The death to which man is now subject then is not merely the death of the body. The death threatened in Genesis ii. 17, was destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, so says St. Paul. In second Timothy, the same Apostle writes, "this spiritual death is that death which Christ has abolished," and in so doing, hath brought life and immortality clearly to light. Further, it is said, whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Now faith in Christ, while it secures us against death, never does prevent our going down to the grave. Fallen man's returning to the dust from which he was taken, was appointed in connexion with the intimation of the coming of the Saviour.

This connexion is clearly pointed out in Hebrews ix. 27 and 28. "It is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment," in exact correspondence with the divine purpose that Christ should be once offered to bear the sins of many, and appear the second time, to them that look for him, without sin, unto salvation. Having thus seen then that all have come short of the glory of God, and that one of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith rests upon it, we proceed to consider the assertion "that Christ died for all."

It may tend to elucidate the subject, and may at the same time save unnecessary (trouble and) repetition to speak of one or two of the terms used in connexion with the subject of the atonement, and more especially those allied to the *all* in our text. There are few more general expressions in scripture than that of God loving the world, as in John iii, 15, where it refers to all mankind, in opposition to the Jews, who held themselves alone to be distinguished by the favor of God. Again, Nicodemus supposed that Messiah would come to save Israel, and to condemn the world, but the Lord informed him that God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Surely this does not mean that it was God's purpose to save all men; had

this been so, it would have been effected. It obviously means men of all nations, "There is now neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision." In the words of the verse immediately succeeding the 15th of this chapter, "no man is known after the flesh." The best comment on those passages which speak of Christ dying for the sins of the *whole world*, and dying *for all*, is the song of the redeemed. They sung a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests." Again, "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."

But an illustration will show the absurdity of interpreting the *world*, *every*, and the like, in their widest latitude. The rule of interpretation which is applied to vindicate universalism, from the general expressions employed, will go on to establish universal salvation. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me." "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of *the world*." "We know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of *the world*." The condemnation of all might with equal justice be established. "The *whole world* lieth in wickedness." "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." What renders the last quotation more striking is the fact, that it stands in immediate connexion with the assertion, that "Christ enlighteneth *every man* that cometh into the world." The expressions *world*, *all*, are often used to denote *many*. The Pharisees said, "*the world* is gone after Him."

If these and many similar expressions cannot be understood to mean all mankind, there can be no good reason shown, that all mankind are beloved of God, or that Christ died to expiate the sins of those who live in sin, die in sin, and to whom he will declare "I never knew you." In short, universal atonement cannot be maintained after a careful perusal of God's word. Let us for the moment lay aside mere verbal criticism. What place, we ask, does the system of rewards and punishments so clearly unfolded in the Bible hold in the religious belief of one who persuades himself that Christ died *for all*? What object would such an individual

assign to the future judgment? What construction could he put on those passages of scripture which affirm that the judge will reward the righteous and punish the wicked?

We shall now especially and briefly, confine our succeeding remarks to the word *all* in our text. It refers as we have said to men of all nations, in opposition to Israel, to whom, as they believed, for so long a period, the means of salvation were limited. We now approach that part of the passage before us which appears most important. We offer our remarks with reverence, conscious of what we have still to learn concerning the loftiest of schemes.—

“For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” Our translators render the second clause: “then were all dead,” but this we consider the original will scarcely bear. The same tense of the same verb is employed in both clauses, and therefore to vary the translation seems unwise. The sense is brought fully out by the following verbal alteration “because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all then all died.” In this passage the Apostle teaches us, that all for whom Christ died, died in him, that in virtue of the unity of the Head and the members, his death was their death.—Those then for whom Christ’s death is made applicable, are such as die daily to sin, such as triumph daily over the evil passions entailed upon them in consequence of the fall, and who are seeking by faith in the Lord Jesus, to overcome the world, the devil, and the flesh.

This seems to be the doctrine on this subject throughout all the epistles, and hence believers are enjoined to reckon themselves dead to sin. In Romans this passage occurs which appears to go far to confirm this statement. “Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for, he that is dead is freed from sin.” Verse 8th, “*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him*.”—In Colossians it is written, “Wherefore if we be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world.”—Again, in the same epistle, it is said “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God, when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” After stating (verse 15th,) that Christ died for all, “that those who live (in other words are dead unto sin, and alive unto God,) should not live unto

themselves, but unto him that died for them, and that rose again," he proceeds, "wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."

In common with the Jews, Paul had known Christ, after the flesh, as the Saviour of the Jewish nation, but when he learned that Christ died for all, (not for that nation only, but that he might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, to whatever nation they belong) he knew no man after the flesh—*i. e.* he accounted no man nearer the kingdom of God, on account of his birth—nor did he know Christ after the flesh, as the Saviour of any particular family. He proceeds, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." The redemption wrought out, and accomplished by Christ then, is not simply a means of escape from merited punishment, it is something more, it must be completed and perfected *in* the believer himself, who must have suitable dispositions and habits, before the sufficiency which is in the Lord Jesus can be savingly applied. Believers must be created anew in Christ Jesus. They have put off the old man with his deeds, are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. Hence old things are past away, behold all things are become new. Our attention is then directed to him by whose power this change has been effected: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, who hath given us the ministry of reconciliation." Paul affirms that the gospel dispensation had been committed to the Apostles, that dispensation which showed that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them—Here we are taught, that the trespasses of the *world* which God was reconciling unto himself in Christ, are not imputed unto them. This necessarily refers only to the people of God, for, to all other their trespasses are imputed; but as the redeemed consist of men of all nations, the general term *the world* is made use of. It is worthy of remark that the same expression is employed in Romans, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world." This surely as we already noticed cannot refer to every individual of mankind, but refers to God visiting the Gentiles, having commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature. Now then continues the

Apostle at the end of the chapter, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The atonement was made, the sacrifice was accepted, and sinners were invited to enjoy the friendship of God, through the death of his Son. The invitation was enforced by the consideration he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, *that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.* God at first created man after his image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, and and the sacrifice of Christ opened up the way, by which the Almighty could be the just God, and at the same time the Justifier of the ungodly who believe, by which he could in strict conformity to his nature urge men by the agency of his Holy Spirit, to die unto sin, and to live unto holiness, that that image which they had forfeited **might** be restored. The verse also teaches us that the sins of Christ's people are imputed to their substitute, but such a statement is addressed to those upon whom the atonement has had its legitimate effect, viz: upon those who were perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. If this holiness were not going on in the Believer, he does not at the time avail himself of the sacrifice made for sin, the aim and object of the scheme of salvation being to raise men from the moral guilt and pollution into which they have been brought by the fall, and to make them indeed and in truth the sons of God, partakers of his holiness, and bearing marks of restoration to his image in their outward walk and conversation.

There is another passage, and it is the last that we shall notice, that on all occasions is advanced to prove the atonement universal, and under which men are too prone to take a precarious shelter. It is said in Hebrews ii. and 9th, "Christ tasted death for every man." There can be few stronger expressions in scripture than this is; if we examine the context, however, even in a cursory manner, we shall easily perceive the conditional nature of its use. The Apostle in the first verse of the second chapter states, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip." In the third verse he continues, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation," as if he had said, if the Jews escape not, who have all along been taught to walk in the right way, how shall we, who live in the light of the gospel, escape the wrath of God, ready to be outpoured on every unbeliever. It is a melancholy truth

that the careless and profligate encourage themselves in their wickedness, by persuading themselves from isolated passages of sacred truth, that Christ died for all, and that therefore they are safe. Both the conclusion and premises in their case are wrong. It is quite true, those for whom Christ died shall never perish, he hath bought them with his blood, and in his mediatorial character, has all power in heaven and in earth, to secure the fruit of his purchase. He redeemed them to God's service by his blood, they are all sanctified by the Spirit.

Thus we have endeavoured to prove that the whole tenor of the word of God is opposed to the doctrine of Christ having died for all mankind. In the fulness of time he appeared, and having offered the great sacrifice, sat down on the right hand of God, having first commanded the gospel to be preached indiscriminately to all, without respect to national distinction; at the same time foretelling that his flock would be a little flock. This has been confirmed by the event. "Broad is the way and wide is the gate that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." It has also happened in the providence of God, that for nearly nineteen hundred years, but a small part of the world has been visited with the light of the gospel; and the Scriptures teach us that Christ's salvation is communicated through the medium of faith, and that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Further, if the sentiment that Christ died for all be correct, then is the idea of an atonement set aside altogether. If the atonement was made for all, and if it was sufficient for all, all must be saved. We affirm *all must* be saved, because guilt could not be charged both on the Saviour, and on those for whom he suffered. This assertion necessarily leads to one of two conclusions, either that all men are made holy, for, without holiness no man can see the Lord, or that unconverted and unsanctified men are admitted into heaven. The former of these is contradicted by fact, and the latter is an abnegation of the difference between virtue and vice, and indeed a denial of the existence of God as moral governor, even as it is said in Scripture "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."

We are now prepared to coincide with the Apostle, when he breaks forth into the expression, "for the Love of Christ *constrains*

us to live no longer unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and who rose again." In other words, that this Redemption wrought out by Jesus was to be perfected in the believer. God's grace, we read, reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life. And therefore the consequent appreciation of the love of Christ by the Apostle. The Love shed abroad in his heart caused him to love God intensely, and to love and labor for the salvation of souls. Hence his declaration, "we are ambassadors for Christ, and beseech you in His stead, be ye reconciled to God." It is then the Love of Christ in effecting atonement for us that enables us to love Him, and to seek the advancement of his glory. As the Apostle declares, we love Him, because he first loved us. As God so loved the world as to give his son for it, and as Christ so loved the world as to pour out his life for it, so we, influenced by the consideration of such love, should desire to spend and be spent for the glory of God and the salvation of immortal souls. And as a greater inducement to devote himself more earnestly to his calling, he felt himself impelled, nay more, under obligation to live not unto himself. We are not left to discover what living to ourselves is, it is the opposite of living to the Lord Jesus. Living to him consists in seeking his honor and glory, and more especially by letting our light so shine before men, that we may glorify "Our Father which is in Heaven." Having then Love as our actuating principle, and the truth as our guide, we must, if we be to benefit by Christ's redemption, depart from all iniquity, and be holy as God is holy. To live to God in scripture language then is to die to sin. To allow sin no more to reign in our mortal bodies,—to rise to newness of life, that the graces of the christian character may have free scope, and healthy developement. And this principle of Love ought more especially to be our actuating motive, inasmuch as we have the hope of a glorious immortality, and resurrection from the dead, because He rose.

As all the prospects of entering a world where there is no death and no grave, is to be traced to the resurrection of the Saviour, so we are bound by every obligation of gratitude to devote ourselves like the Apostle without reserve to Him alone—to Him, and to Him alone should we live, being doubly His. By this alone can the work of redemption be perfected within us, and the Saviour see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.